

**EAST COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD  
MINUTES**

**FINAL**

**Meeting of February 6, 2008**

Eastern Montgomery Regional Services Center  
3300 Briggs Chaney Road  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904

**Members Present:** Kim Bobola, PhD (Chair), Sheala Durant (Secretary), Bill Strassberger (Parliamentarian), Thomas Aylward, Kimberly Y. Campbell, Tracy DuPree Davis, Marva R. Deskins, G. Stanley Doore, Allan Mulligan, Kim Jones, John Thomas, Benoy Thomas, Andre Carl Whisenton.

**Members Absent:** Colleen Ionata (Vice Chair), Ismael Gama, Prasiddh Sinha, Will Kenlaw

**Members Withdrawn:** Jemal A. Cheatham

**Staff:** Anise Key Brown (Director, EMRSC), Anjoo Chohda (SEAA, EMRSC).

**Guests:** Jeanette Mendonca (Community Liaison Senator Rona Kramer's office), Danny Jacobs, (Reporter, Gazette newspaper), Officer Morris Dylan, Gang Investigations officer, 3<sup>rd</sup> District Police Station, Lieutenant Robert Carter, 3<sup>rd</sup> District Police Station, Dale Tibbitts, (Council member Marc Elrich's office), Frank Caruso, GLCA/BAA/Citizens Involved, Terry Blount-Williams (Department of Recreation representative).

**Call to Order:** The chair called the meeting to order at 7:20 p.m.

**Moment of Silence:** The meeting commenced with a moment of silence in the honor of Council member Marilyn J. Praisner. Chair Bobola expressed sympathy and sincere regrets to her family, and conveyed Prasiddh Sinha's suggestion that the Board pass a condolence resolution and send the same to the bereaved family.

**Citizen's Forum:** Chair Bobola welcomed everyone. Guests were asked to identify any issues or concerns that they wished to share with the Board. Additionally, they were requested to state what action they wanted the Board to take.

- **Frank Caruso:** introduced himself and shared his 20-year interest in the community. He announced that on February 12<sup>th</sup> he will be one of the Election Judges at the Eastern Montgomery Regional Services Center. He disseminated a copy of a letter dated February 1, 2008 addressed to Hon. Rona E. Kramer, Senator of Maryland by Neil J. Pederson, SHA, Maryland Department of Transportation regarding a sound barrier and bike path in conjunction with the project to construct an interchange at US 29 and Greencastle Road.
- **Dale Tibbitts:** from Council member Marc Elrich's office, was attending the meeting for updates.

- **Danny Jacobs:** reporter, with the Gazette newspaper, greeted everyone.
- **Terry Blount-Williams** (Department of Recreation): conveyed that she holds the ECCAB Committee in high regard, and follows its activities.
- **Jeanette Mendonca:** introduced herself as the new Community Liaison in Senator Rona Kramer's office. She anticipates that she will attend the monthly board meetings, and looks forward to any issue or concerns that need to be addressed through the Senate of Maryland.

## Speakers

Chair Bobola announced that Officer Morris, Gang Investigation officer, 3<sup>rd</sup> District Police station, would update the board on current gang activities in East County.

**Officer Morris Dylan, Gang Investigation officer and Lt. Robert Carter (3<sup>rd</sup> District Police Station):** introduced themselves, and identified their jurisdiction (Burtonsville, Colesville, Cloverly, Fairland, and White Oak communities and Silver Spring). The board was informed that gangs have now spread throughout sectors of society and gang activities have worsened dramatically in recent years. The presentation highlighted the following:

## What is a gang?

- A gang is commonly thought of as a self-formed association of peers who are involved in criminal activity. The official definition is: A formal or informal ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons who: have a common name or common identifying signs, colors or symbols and; have members or associates who, individually or collectively, engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal gang activity.
- Gangs are known to engage in a variety of crimes including theft, vandalism, drug trafficking, robbery, assault, and murder. Law enforcement officials have also noted that while the severity of gang violence varies widely among jurisdictions, their criminal activity often crosses jurisdictional lines.
- No individual race or ethnic group is immune to recruitment by gang members, involvement in gang activity or the destructive effects that result from violent or criminal acts caused by gang members. Nevertheless, reports in the counties and in the region indicate a high incidence of Latino/Hispanic participation in area gangs.
- According to a Prince George's County police official, the larger Latino/Hispanic gangs are extremely organized; they hold meetings, collect dues, maintain ledgers, grant themselves ranks and viciously punish anyone who veers from their rules.

### **Who joins gangs?**

Gang members generally range in age from 13-21 years old, but can be as young as 9 years old. Those who join gangs often have low self-esteem, feel unloved at home, do poorly in school, and have a hard time making decisions and communicating with others. Many come from single parent homes. Most gang members are boys, but 10% of all gang members are girls and the number is growing.

### **Why do kids join gangs?**

Kids join gangs for many reasons, and each case is individual. However, reasons include: excitement and fun, a sense of belonging, companionship, peer pressure, attention or status, financial gain, intimidation, protection, and a failure to realize what being in a gang means. Living in a gang-infested area or having a family member in a gang increases the possibility of a kid joining one.

### **Why, in particular, do Latino/Hispanic youth join gangs?**

These gangs, based on race and ethnicity, offer the same social environment as non-Latino/Hispanic gangs: something young people feel they can belong to. Many of the parents of gang members work extended hours to make ends meet, keeping them away from their homes, with the result that their children feel abandoned. But these youth also experience a disconnect as they become more Americanized-sometimes because they aren't fluent in English, other times because they still feel a pull to the "old" world of their parents. The rules and regulations connected to Hispanic gangs, therefore, are omnipresent. Gang membership revolves around social behavior, so membership and expectations about behavior are much tougher, and "family" discipline is much more violent.

### **What risk factors lead to gang membership?**

Upon joining a gang, new members immediately inherit the hate from rival gangs. Feuds between gangs result in injury or even death to the members involved. This violence extends to the families of gang members who may also be in danger for their own safety. Another consequence of joining a gang is the risk involved in leaving the gang. Along with membership initiation comes an exiting ritual, and in some national gangs, leaving the gang is forbidden.

### **As a parent, you should be concerned if your child:**

- Admits to gang involvement;
- Is obsessed with one particular color of clothing or shows a desire for a particular logo over and over;
- Wears sagging pants (this in and of itself is not indicative of gang activity);
- Wears excessive jewelry with distinctive designs and may wear it only on either the right or left side of the body;
- Is obsessed with gangster-influenced music, videos and movies to the point of imitation;
- Withdraws from family with an accompanying change in demeanor;
- Associates with undesirable friends and breaks parental rules consistently;

- Develops an unusual desire for privacy and secrecy and may completely rearrange living quarters to create privacy;
- Uses hand signs while with friends and practices them at home;
- Or there is the appearance of:
  - Physical injury (such as being beaten) and then child lies about the events surrounding the injury;
  - Peculiar drawings or language on school books (may appear later as tattoos or brands);
  - Unexplained cash or goods, such as clothing or jewelry;
  - Possible use of alcohol and drugs with attitude change.

### **How can you help?**

Stay informed, involved, and aware. Help your children to choose to refuse gang membership by becoming more involved in their lives, by building self-esteem at home, and by working to combat the gang problem in your community. See other side for SIGNS OF POSSIBLE GANG INVOLVEMENT and who to contact.

### **Signs of possible gang involvement**

1. Sudden poor school grades and disinterest in school.
2. Withdrawn from family activities.
3. Use of unknown vocabulary (gangs may have many slang words).
4. Sudden change in friends.
5. Evidence of drug abuse.
6. Sudden affluence.
7. Use of hand signs.
8. Desire for excessive privacy.
9. Having a new nickname.
10. Developing a bad attitude towards family, school, and authorities.
11. Purchase or desire to buy clothing of all one color or style.
12. Wearing altered headwear (gang members often put gang information on the inside band of ball caps).
13. Changing appearance with special haircuts, eyebrow markings or tattoos.
14. Use of gang graffiti on folders, desks, walls, and buildings.
15. Staying out later than usual.

### **Types of criminal street gangs:**

- MS-13 (Mara Salvatrucha) has increased its presence in eastern Montgomery and Prince George's counties, particularly along the Takoma Park/Langley Park crossroads. Law enforcement officials have linked several shootings in that area to gang members and MS-13 graffiti tags can be found throughout Langley Park and Long Branch.
- Bloods and Crips – is a big problem. Internet, music, prison gang play a big role.

- Other types are E3 MOB, 3 DOTS, 213, TRG TRIGGER, LA VIDA LOCA, B-11 & 310

### **Useful information for authorities**

Attempt to obtain:

1. Gang Name
2. Individuals nickname
3. Length of time in gang
4. Initiation rituals
5. Gang hangouts
6. Gang leader(s)
7. Signs, symbols, tags/graffiti, tattoos and/or colors used by the gang

### **Who to contact**

School counselor, Social services agencies, Health professionals, Clergy, Counselors, Local Police gang unit (Call your District Station)

For detailed information on Gang Prevention, go to

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgtmpl.asp?url=/Content/EXEC/GangTF/index.asp>

**Q&A Session** was conducted with the Board members and guests.

**Chair Bobola:** thanked the officers for the presentation. A link (Gang Prevention: Tips for Parents) will be provided in the monthly newsletters and on the web page.

### **Approval of Minutes:**

Chair Bobola asked members of the board to review the January 2<sup>nd</sup> minutes for revisions. Tom Aylward proposed editions to the minutes.

**[February 6, 2008 – 1]** A motion to approve the minutes of January 2<sup>nd</sup> 2008 as amended was offered. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

### **Chair's Report:** Announcements

1. **Update on High Definition Radio:** The board received a response from the County Executive re. HD Radio. Copies of the letter were distributed to the board members.
2. **Board Vacancies:** Next year there will be six vacancies on the East County Citizens Advisory Board. Candidates interested in serving on the board will be interviewed this spring. Tom Aylward and Kim Jones volunteered to be on the interview panel.
3. **Northwest Branch Recreational Park Master Plan Public Meeting:** is scheduled for February 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm @ Good Hope Recreation Center. For more information, see the February newsletter.

4. **East County Citizens Advisory Board (ECCAB) Meeting with the County Executive:**  
The ECCAB has an opportunity to provide meet with the County Executive on FY-09 Operating Budget and priorities identified for the residents of East County. The meeting will be held on the Wednesday, February 27 @ 8:30 p.m. at the Executive Office Building in Rockville.
  - **Stan Doore:** suggested that Gang and Crime Prevention be the number one priority of the testimony.

**Director's Report: Anise Key Brown**

1. **County Executive's Budget Forum:** Thanked Chair Bobola, Stan Doore, Prassidh Sinha, and Carl Whisenton for attending the County Executive's Budget Forum of January 16th held at the EMRSC.
2. **Vacancy Announcement for ECCAB Members.** The reapplication deadline has been extended to February 11<sup>th</sup> for those board members who wish to reapply for their positions. Currently, there is need for seven members since Jemal Cheatham has resigned due to relocation.
3. **County Executive's Annual Meeting with Boards, Committees, and Commissions (B/C/Cs)** has been scheduled for Thursday, February 28, 2008 @ 8:30 pm, Executive Office Building (EOB) 2nd Floor, Rockville, Maryland. Additional information will be provided to board members.
4. **East County Youth Initiative:** has been created by members of the community. Plans are being developed for a Youth Rally sometime in June/September. Madam Chair was asked to appoint a board member to the Youth Initiative Committee. Board member, Kimberly Campbell volunteered to participate.
5. **Youth Representation on ECCAB:** Kim Jones, member of the Outreach Committee, had proposed that youth from each school represent/attend board meetings. The recommendation is to pursue this proposal, since we need to hear from the youth in East County.
6. **Construction Update # 1 from Department of Public Works and Transportation:** Copies of update documents were distributed to board members. These documents included the Capital Development US 29 Sidewalk Project.
7. **Washington Adventist Hospital:** has submitted a Special Exception Application. Board members who are interested in reviewing the details may request their copies by contacting Robert Jepson directly.
8. **February East County Intercom:** A list of activities is mentioned in the newsletter.

9. **Team Quads:** We are planning to downsize the contact list. The suggestion was to establish contact with at least one school, one business, restaurant, or a neighbor who has been in the community for over 20 years. Two Quads will be asked to report in May and the other two in June. For additional information, please refer to the “Partner of the Month” featured in our monthly newsletter.
10. **Town Hall Meeting Scheduled for March 20th:** The County Executive will be holding a town hall meeting on March 20<sup>th</sup> at Briggs Chaney Middle School.
11. **Loss of Council Member Marilyn J. Praisner:** The outstanding and valuable contributions made in the East County by Marilyn J. Praisner were shared with the board. Mrs. Praisner was the “Mother of the East County.” In many respects, East County was created by her, and eventually grew, based on her struggle, efforts and support. She was involved with Recreation Department, Libraries, and White Oak Community Center. Anise Key Brown was devastated to hear the sad news of the passing of Mrs. Praisner. It is a “big loss for the East County. We will miss her and, in her honor will continue to remember her and her significant efforts, and will continue to fight and grow the east county.”

## **Committee Reports**

### **Outreach Committee:** Marva Deskins

- **Leadership Summit:** At its last meeting, the Outreach Committee discussed a having a Leadership Summit. The proposed date for holding the event is Saturday, October 18<sup>th</sup>. The committee will be determining which forum to be addressed (Gang Act, Heath). Will Kenlaw has approached Gazette as to whether the survey will be run.
- **Adopt the Road Program:** March 29 was selected as the date for the Road Cleanup, as weather is a factor to be considered if the Road Cleanup were to be held earlier in the year. Two years ago, Kim Jones had contacted an advisor at Paint Branch High School who coordinates community service and requested the assistance of student volunteers. This year, John Thomas was suggesting that outreach could be extended to Boy Scout troops in the area.
  - **Complaint Received:** Anise Key Brown received a complaint from the Department of Public Works and Transportation regarding the Adopt a Road program. Chuck Crisostomo has forwarded this information to committee members so this could be discussed at the committee meetings next week. Board members were asked if they were willing to continue on the Program since it needs a commitment.
  - **Tracy Davis:** asked if the board could partner with other groups. Anise Key Brown responded that this could be discussed at the committee meetings.
  - **Terry Blount-Williams:** suggested that an announcement on *Volunteers needed to participate on Adopt the Road Program* could be displayed on the web page.

- **Marva Deskins:** replied that the Committee will give it a thought and get back sometime next week with the date for Adopt the Road program.

**Services Committee:** Allan Mulligan

**Colleen Ionata:** had a passed along committee meeting notes to Allan Mulligan to share with the board. Stan Doore is awaiting a response from Claire Iseli regarding the letter from Margaret Poore about the graffiti in the Calverton community.

- **Crime Forum:** Chuck Crisostomo will assist the committee in getting a panel together for a Crime Forum.
- **Choosing Civility:** The Services Committee is recommending that the board review the Choosing Civility letter and consider sending it to Dr. Jerry Weast, Superintendent, Montgomery County Pubic Schools.
  - **John Thomas:** suggested sending the Choosing Civility book with the letter.
- **Health Fair:** The committee discussed holding a Health Fair in conjunction with Center.
  - **Kimberly Campbell:** suggested holding the idea of a Health Fair until the survey results are reviewed.
  - **Kim Bobola:** shared that a Health Fair was a priority identified by the board.
  - **Tracy Davis:** conveyed that, at the Town Hall meeting, health was one of the issues of the County Executive.
  - **Anise Key Brown:** shared that the meeting on February 28<sup>th</sup> is open to all board members. If health issues are a priority, the board should involve Sharon Strauss, HHS department as a resource. She also suggested that a letter of invitation could be written to Uma Ahluwalia, Director, HHS asking for their participation. She also suggested the Services Committee could hold the program at the center the same date of the Jazz Festival.
- **More Committee Members Needed.** The committee has only four members, and is in need of additional members.

**Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee:** Tom Aylward

- The committee met and discussed the following topics: (a) affordable housing; (b) transportation (relating to the Master Plan and the ICC), (c) paths of ICC, and (d) the Trolley Museum. The Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee is setting up a meeting with Bill Barron, with Parks and Planning, to learn more about the Master Plans for the East County Services region.



- **Andre Carl Whisenton:** updated the board on a recent ICC meeting. Four representatives attended. Contracts for portions of the ICC have been awarded; they are moving ahead and working on the design process.

### **Old Business**

- **Choosing Civility:** Stan Doore hoped that the board would accept the letter addressed to the County Executive. Chair Bobola corrected: the letter should be addressed to MCPS Superintendent.

**[February 6, 2008 – 2]** A motion to change the letter addressed to Dr. Weast and cc to Hon. Isiah Leggett, County Executive and Hon. Mike Knapp, Council President and send with a Choosing Civility book.

Voting was conducted by show of hands. 8 members voted for the motion. The motion carried.

### **New Business**

- **Stan Doore:** spoke on article distributed to members - Dust Storms Overseas Carry Contaminants to U.S. Suggests to recognize Global warming as a problem. Stan motioned to move this item to committee for further discussion.
- **Chair Bobola:** asked if there was a second. Since the motion was not seconded, Stan's document Dust Storms Overseas Carry Contaminants will be treated as an information item only.
- **Anise Key Brown:** announced that the County Executive is in the process of changing the name of East County Citizens Advisory Board (ECCAB) to East County Regional Advisory Board (ECRAB). The change in name needs to be adopted by the County Council. Any comments, suggestions by the Board are welcome. Anise Key Brown will send email copies before the next committee meeting.
  - Tom Aylward: suggested that we need to review this information.
  - Tracy Davis: suggested that changing the name to East County *Community* Advisory Board, we will still remain "ECCAB."
- **Chair Bobola:** announced that the committee meetings will be held next week on schedule.

**Adjournment :** The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 pm.

The next East County Citizens Advisory Board meeting will be held on ***Wednesday, March 5, 2008.***